

# Banana

## History

Bananas were first grown in Southeast Asian jungles. Most people believe that bananas originated in the country of Malaysia because of the large variety of bananas found there. It is likely that they were the first fruit to be farmed by humans.

Bananas were brought to the Americas by Spanish explorers in the 1500s. The first banana shoot is thought to be planted in the islands of the Caribbean in 1516. Bananas did not make their way to the US until the 1800s when sailors brought banana shoots home from the Caribbean. They were first sold for 10 cents in 1876 at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. Today, bananas are shipped to the US from Central and South America.

## Varieties

When you go to a grocery store, you will likely find Cavendish bananas. However, there are other varieties that can be found.

**Baby/Dwarf Bananas** are bananas that taste like a Cavendish, but are smaller, sweeter, and have a thin peel.

**Red Bananas** are bananas that have a red peel that turns dark purple when ripe. They also are very sweet and may have a hint of strawberry flavor.

**Plantains** look like large, green bananas, but they do not taste like bananas. Plantains are not sweet but are starchy like a potato. They are frequently used in Latin American cooking and served like corn or potatoes.



## Fun Facts

- Bananas have been growing on Earth for over one million years
- Bananas do not grow on trees- they grow on giant herbs
- Bunches of bananas grow pointing up
- Bunches of bananas are called “hands” and each hand has about 20 “fingers”
- The average American eats 28 pounds of bananas every year- that equals 112 bananas
- Each stem of a banana plant only flowers and produces fruit once



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